

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ACDA-12 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9768
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
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AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMCONSUL TRIESTE POUCH
AMCONSUL TURIN POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 0514

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: VIEWS OF DC PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LEADERS PICCOLI AND
BARTOLOMEI ON GOVERNMENT CRISIS

SUMMARY: THE CHARGE CALLED ON FLAMINIO PICCOLI, PRESIDENT
OF THE DC GROUP IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, ON JANUARY 10;
ON THE PRECEDING EVENING, THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR MET
WITH GIUSEPPE BARTOLOMEI, PRESIDENT OF THE DC GROUP IN
THE SENATE. BOTH SENIOR DC LEADERS SAID THEY FULLY UNDER-
STOOD AND APPRECIATED USG POLICY TOWARD ITALY. PICCOLI
VOLUNTEERED THAT THE AMBASSADOR'S RETURN ON CONSULTATIONS
PROVIDED A SIGNAL THAT WAS USEFUL TO THE DC IN RESISTING
PRESSURES TO ACCOMMODATE PCI DEMANDS FOR A GREATER SHARE IN THE
GOVERNING PROCESS. OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE IN VIEW OF
THE DC DIRECTORATE MEETING ON JAN. 11 AND THE DC PARLIAMENTARY
ASSEMBLY MEETINGS ON JAN. 12-13, BOTH PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS
CONFIRMED THE STRONG OPPOSITION OF THE "MAJORITY" OF
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THE DC CHAMBER AND SENATE GROUPS AGAINST A NEOTIATED
SOLUTION IN WHICH THE COMMUNISTS WOULD BE INVITED TO
PARTICIPATE IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. BOTH
BARTOLOMEI AND PICCOLI DESCRIBED THE PRESENT SITUATION
AS CONFUSED AND DECLINED TO PREDICT THE OUTCOME OF
THE DC DIRECTORATE MEETING OR THE TREND OF EVENTS
IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN HIS MEETING WITH PICCOLI, THE CHARGE REITERATED OUR POSITION ON THE COMMUNIST ISSUE IN VIEW OF THE DISTORTIONS THAT HAVE APPEARED IN THE PRESS AND ELSEWHERE. PICCOLI SAID THAT OUR ATTITUDE HAD ALWAYS BEEN CLEAR TO HIM AND INDEED HE AGREED WITH IT. IN FACT, HE SAID HE REGARDED THE AMBASSADOR'S RETURN ON CONSULTATIONS AS A POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PRESENT SITUATION. IT AND THE ATTENDANT PUBLICITY IN THE ITALIAN PRESS PROVIDED A USEFUL SIGNAL TO THOSE IN THE DC WHO MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO REGARD FURTHER ACCOMMODATION OF THE PCI AS NECESSARY. HE STRONGLY IMPLIED THAT ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE OF STRONG US OPPOSITION TO ENLARGEMENT OF THE PCI ROLE IN THE GOVERNING PROCESS WHICH MIGHT EMERGE FROM THE AMBASSADOR'S CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON WOULD BE HELPFUL AND WELCOME.

2. PICCOLI DESCRIBED THE PRESENT SITUATION AS ONE OF GREAT CONFUSION, MAKING IT DIFFICULT TO HAZARD A PREDICTION ON THE POSSIBLE OUTCOME. ON ONE POINT HE HAD NO DOUBT. AS THE SPOKESMAN FOR THE ATTITUDES OF THE DC CHAMBER GROUP, PICCOLI SAID THAT THE "GREAT MAJORITY" OF THE DC PARLIAMENTARIANS STRONGLY OPPOSED ANY SOLUTION THAT BROUGHT THE PCI FURTHER INTO THE GOVERNING PROCESS. IN PARTICULAR, THEY FIRMLY

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OPPOSED PCI INCLUSION IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. PICCOLI SAID THAT A MAJORITY OF THE DC SENATORS ALSO SHARED THIS VIEW. MOREOVER, HE SAID THAT THE PARTY'S LEADERS WERE FULLY AWARE OF THIS SENTIMENT (THE DC LEADERSHIP HAD MET IN ADREOTTI'S OFFICE ON JAN. 9) AND WERE AGREED THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO MAINTAIN PARTY UNITY AND TO AVOID A "DISASTROUS" SPLIT IN THE PARTY. PICCOLI SAID THAT WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF FANFANI (WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS THE MOST OPPORTUNISTIC OF ALL DC LEADERS), NONE OF THE DC'S LEADERS WOULD PURSUE A POLICY THAT WOULD RISK MAJOR DEFECTIONS AMONG DC PARLIAMENTARIANS.

3. IN RESPONSE TO THE CHARGE'S QUESTION, PICCOLI SAID HE PERCEIVES LITTLE DISTINCTION BETWEEN FULL PCI PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT AND PCI INCLUSION IN THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. IN FACT, HE AND SOME COLLEAGUES BELIEVE THE LATTER FORMULA TO BE EVEN MORE UNDESIRABLE SINCE IT WOULD NOT MAKE THE PCI RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS ACTIONS IN THE GOVERNING MAJORITY. MOREOVER, THE PCI WOULD BE LEFT FREE TO ARGUE AT A LATER TIME (AND MOST DANGEROUSLY DURING THE "WHITE SEMESTER")

THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAM WAS DEFICIENT. COMMENTING ON THE PCI, PICCOLI SAID THAT LEADERSHIP DIFFERENCES WERE APPARENT. SOME PCI DEPUTIES WERE EVEN TALKING OPENLY OF THE POSSIBILITY THAT BERLINGUER MIGHT BE REPLACED. THEY POINTED TO PCI GROUP PRESIDENT NATTA AS A POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR.

4. PICCOLI SAID THAT THE DC LEADERS HAD AGREED ON A SCENARIO DURING THEIR JAN. 9 MEETING THAT WOULD PERMIT ANDREOTTI TO RESIGN BUT STILL FIX THE RESPONSIBILITY SQUARELY ON THE PCI, PSI AND PRI FOR PROVOKING THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS. UNDER THIS PLAN, ANDREOTTI WOULD CONSULT THE INDIVIDUAL PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS AS TO WHETHER THEY STILL SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT
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BY ABSTENTION. THE LIBERALS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS WOULD INDICATE THEIR AGREEMENT, BUT THE PCI, PSI AND PRI WOULD ANNOUNCE THEIR WITHDRAWAL OF SUPPORT. ANDREOTTI WOULD THEN INFORM PRESIDENT LEONE OF THE NECESSITY TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT. ACCORDING TO PICCOLI, THIS PROCEDURE WOULD NOT BE INCONSISTENT WITH THE COMMON PRACTICE OF EXPRESSING SUCH DECISIONS THROUGH A PARLIAMENTARY VOTE OF CONFIDENCE SINCE THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP LEADS "REPRESENT" THE VIEW OF THEIR

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INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 0514

RESPECTIVE GROUPS. COMMENT: IN VIEW OF ANDREOTTI'S EARLIER INSISTANCE THAT HE WOULD NOT STEP DOWN WITHOUT A PARLIAMENTARY VOTE OF NO-CONFIDENCE, IT APPEARS THAT THE DC MAY HAVE ENGAGED IN A COMPROMISE WITH THE LEFT PARTIES WHICH HAVE BEEN SEEKING TO AVOID RESPONSIBILITY IN A PARLIAMENTARY VOTE. THE PROCEDURE OUTLINED BY PICCOLI IS ESSENTIALLY THAT WHICH PSI LEADER MANCA HAD EARLIER ADVOCATED IN A PUBLIC STATEMENT. END COMMENT.

5. IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH BARTOLOMEI, THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR ALSO CLEARLY RESTATED USG ATTITUDES ON THE PROBLEM OF PCI PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT. BARTOLOMEI EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR OUR POSITION. HE THEN MADE HIS OWN POSITION UNMISTAKABLY CLEAR: HE OPPOSES NOT ONLY COMMUNISTS IN AN EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT BUT ALSO COMMUNISTS IN THE MAJORITY BECAUSE SUCH AN ACTION WOULD CONFIRM TO THE ITALIAN PUBLIC

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DC ACCEPTANCE OF A TREND WHICH WOULD INEVITABLY END WITH FULL PCI PARTICIPATION IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT MOST OF THE SENATE DC GROUP SUPPORTED HIM IN THIS, AND HE INTENDED TO FIGHT FOR THIS POSITION IN THE DC DIRECTORATE MEETING. HE COMPLAINED QUITE OPENLY ABOUT THE DC LEADERSHIP AND ITS LOOSE TALK ABOUT THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT BEING FINISHED, ABOUT THE DC'S WILLINGNESS TO BRING THE PCI INTO THE MAJORITY, AND SOME DC LEADERS' ATTEMPTS TO DISTORT THE US POSITION ON THE MATTER. HE DID NOT NAME NAMES BUT QUITE CLEARLY HE WAS TALKING PRINCIPALLY ABOUT GALLONI. BARTOLOMEI DECLINED TO MAKE PREDICTIONS ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE DC DIRECTORATE MEETING OR ABOUT THE TREND OF EVENTS IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

6. ASKED WHAT WE SHOULD BE DOING, BARTOLOMEI SAID THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE COULD DO WOULD BE TO ENCOURAGE THE LAY PARTIES NOT TO PUT THE DC IN A POSITION WHICH WOULD MAKE ELECTIONS UNAVOIDABLE. HE SAID THAT THE LAY PARTIES SHOULD BE CONVINCED THAT IT IS IN THEIR INTEREST NOT TO INSIST ON CONCESSIONS TO THE COMMUNISTS WHICH IN TURN PUT THE PCI IN A POSITION WHERE IT CANNOT SETTLE FOR LESS THAN THE LAY PARTIES

DEMAND FOR IT. IF THE LAY PARTIES PERSIST IN THIS, SPECIFICALLY THE PSI AND THE PRI, THEY WILL FORCE THE SITUATION TO THE POINT WHERE ELECTIONS ARE INEVITABLE. HOWEVER, SUCH ELECTIONS WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE A DISASTER FOR THE LAY PARTIES AND THUS, IN A SENSE, ALSO FOR THE DC. THE DC NEEDS THE FLEXIBILITY THAT THE LAY PARTIES PROVIDE. POLARIZATION (I.E.M, ELIMINATION OR VIRTUAL ELIMINATION OF THE LAY PARTIES) WOULD BE A DISASTER FOR ITALY, ACCORDING TO BARTOLOMEI. CONFIDENTIAL

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7. COMMENT: SINCE PICCOLI HAS VACILLATED IN HIS PREVIOUS PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON HOW THE PCI CHALLENGE SHOULD BE MET, IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT HE HAS APPARENTLY ADOPTED A STRONG POSITION AGAINST CONCESSIONS TO THE PCI THAT WOULD BRING THAT PARTY INTO THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY. AS SUCH, PICCOLI REFLECTS THE GROWING SENTIMENT AMONG DC PARLIAMENTARIANS AGAINST SUCH A STEP. IN ADDITION TO THE MORE THAN 70 PARLIAMENTARIANS WHO HAVE SIGNED A PETITION AGAINST FURTHER ACCOMMODATION OF THE PCI, OTHERS ARE KNOWN TO SHARE THIS VIEW BUT DISAGREE ON THE WISDOM OF INDICATING DC DIVISIVENESS BY ENGAGING IN A PUBLIC CONFRONTATION WITH PARTY LEADERS. WE SUSPECT THAT MANY SHARE BARTOLOMEI'S VIEWS THAT THE DC SHOULD RESOLVE SUCH MATTERS QUIETLY AND WITHIN ITS OWN HOUSE. THE GROWING INTRANSIGENCE OF THE DC PARLIAMENTARIANS SHOULD CONDITION THE DC'S EVENTUAL RESPONSE. BARTOLOMEI'S STATEMENTS ABOUT HIS POSITION INDICATE THAT HE HAS REMAINED CONSTANT IN HIS WELL-KNOWN OPPOSITION TO ACCOMMODATION WITH THE PCI AND PROVIDE EVIDENCE THAT HE HAS BROKEN WITH HIS FRIEND AND MENTOR, FANFANI. HOLMES

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